

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1

LOS ANGELES TIMES
25 FEBRUARY 1983

White House Says It Discouraged Gritz Effort

Eastwood Told Reagan of Planned POW Raid

By RICHARD E. MEYER and MARK GLADSTONE, *Times Staff Writers*

WASHINGTON—Actor Clint Eastwood told President Reagan last fall that former Green Beret James G. (Bo) Gritz was planning a raid into Laos to find American prisoners of war, *The Times* has learned.

Reagan asked his national security advisers about Gritz and what he was doing and was told that the retired lieutenant colonel was "not somebody we ought to be involved with," Administration officials said Thursday.

The President agreed, they said.

Officials from the White House and Department of Defense said they told Gritz's associates to pass the word not to proceed.

However, Gritz team members said the messages they received in Southeast Asia told them the President supported them completely.

Lyndon K. Allin, White House deputy press secretary, declined to answer specific questions about the President, Eastwood and Gritz. "There have been a number of approaches, or a number of different ways, in which information has come to the government about this operation," Allin said. "... These cross-border forays and other independent efforts were discouraged."

'POW ID' Found

Gritz, 44, a Vietnam veteran from the Los Angeles suburb of Westchester, led a patrol of Americans and anti-Communist guerrillas on a futile search into Laos last Nov. 27. Hostile forces attacked the patrol, killing one of the guerrillas and wounding three others. Gritz embarked on another raid Jan. 30, which cost the life of a second guerrilla. Gritz and the Americans on his team were not injured.

Gritz said in a message dated Feb. 12—sent from Laos by runner and received by *The Times* last weekend—that he has "some POW ID." But he did not say whether the "ID" was from a living prisoner or a military man long dead.

Government involvement in Gritz's mission has been the subject of clo

inquiry by the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has maintained an active interest in Gritz since last spring. According to executive-branch accounts given to committee members, it was the Defense Intelligence Agency that first interested Gritz in an effort to rescue POWs.

'Loose Cannon'

In late 1980 or early 1981, according to these accounts, high-level officials in the intelligence agency, reluctant to make the approach themselves, sent a lower-level carrier officer to ask Gritz whether he might be interested in mounting an official government operation—"a legitimate operation," it was called—to find any American prisoners left in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War.

Gritz, a highly decorated veteran of special Army operations, had become increasingly vocal about his beliefs that there might be prisoners left behind, according to these briefings, and the DIA indicated to Gritz that he would be wise to "tone down his profile" if he wanted to become part of a government effort. But Gritz did little to follow this advice.

The Defense Intelligence Agency decided he was "kind of a loose cannon," according to the accounts of those who briefed the Intelligence Committee, and it was decided that he would be too risky to deal with officially.

Last November, at about the time Gritz decided to enter Laos on his own, according to these accounts, Eastwood phoned the President at his ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif., and informed him that he had contributed \$50,000 to the Gritz mission. Gritz's associates have said the amount was \$30,000. Eastwood has declined comment.

The actor told Reagan that the government should be officially involved in POW rescue efforts, according to the testimony of those who briefed the committee, and that the federal government ought to help Gritz, not leave the matter in

When the President returned to Washington, Administration officials told *The Times*, he met in the Oval Office with Robert McFarlane, chief deputy to National Security Adviser William P. Clark.

Reagan asked who Gritz was and what he was doing, these sources said.

Operating on Rumors

McFarlane told him that Gritz was operating on rumors and had no confirmed intelligence about any locations where POWs might be held, and that the Administration had been trying to discourage him, Administration sources said.

"He (McFarlane) told the President that Gritz was not somebody we ought to be involved with," one Administration official said.

"The President said, 'Fine,'" the official added.

All along, this source said, White House officials and Pentagon officers were telling persons who were working with Gritz to instruct him to refrain from any "cross-border operations."

The White House was concerned that such private raids would damage negotiations with the Laotian government. The Administration was seeking permission to visit sites where U.S. aircraft fell during the

Times Staff Writer Robert L. Jackson contributed to this article.

war so that officials could search for remains.

The White House also was concerned that such privately mounted raids would signal Laotians and Vietnamese that only a few individual Americans were interested in accounting for the missing in action—and that the Reagan Administration had no real commitment to discovering their fate.

Rear Adm. Allan G. Paulson, the officer in charge of intelligence collection at the Pentagon, told *The Times* that "people claiming to represent Gritz ... were told that we could not support or condone any operations they were contemplating. We don't consider

CONTINUED

STAT

STAT